

## Culturally Responsive Practices for Youth Literacy Learning

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A great deal has been written about the importance of engaging in culturally responsive pedagogy in recent years (Banks & Banks, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1999; Lee, 1995). Our purpose in this chapter is to examine what it means to talk about culturally responsive pedagogy and its many variants (e.g., culturally relevant pedagogy, multicultural pedagogy), particularly when enacted in secondary (middle, junior, and senior high) school content areas.

The first question to ponder is why a chapter on culturally responsive pedagogy is included in a book on best practice for youth literacy learning. How does it relate to the other best practices discussed in this text? What would it look like to engage in one of the other best practices but not be culturally responsive? Is culturally responsive literacy pedagogy different in the content areas of the secondary school, where young people are expected to study increasingly sophisticated concepts and discursive practices of the different disciplines?

We take the stance that all practice needs to be culturally responsive in order to be best practice. Young people, whether African American, European American, Latino/a, Asian American, or American Indians are, like all people, cultural beings. As cultural beings, young people deserve to experi-

ence pedagogy and curricula that respond to and extend their cultural experiences. Indeed, many recommended mainstream teaching practices *are* designed to be culturally responsive but are enacted in ways that are responsive only to a segment of students; that is, such practices are often, for a variety of reasons, situated in mainstream "ways with words" (Heath, 1983) and knowledges, making them inaccessible to those who do not share such cultural practices.

Our research with youth suggests to us that best practice needs to be responsive to more than culture, at least as culture is often defined, in terms of ethnic, racial, or—less often—social class backgrounds. Instead, best practice, as we see it, is responsive to the many funds of knowledge and Discourse (Gee, 1996) that shape and inform literate practice of youth learners. *Discourse*, as Gee defines it, emphasizes not only language itself but also the *ways* of knowing, doing, being, reading, writing, and talking that people in different communities enact, often without even realizing that their Discourses are unique to their group, whether a cultural, ethnic, gender, or professional group. A number of scholars have demonstrated that these Discourses—ways of knowing and "ways with words" (Heath, 1983)—are present in school and also influence how people teach and learn in school (Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Lemke, 1990; Luke, 1993). Based on such research, we argue that best practice attends to the knowledges and Discourses of the youths' homes; ethnic, racial, or geographic communities; and youth culture, popular culture, school culture, classroom culture, or discipline-specific culture.

In fact, rather than naming a particular sort of responsiveness (i.e., "cultural"), we prefer to talk simply about *responsive teaching*. By responsive teaching, we mean that which *merges* the needs and interests of youth as persons with the needs and interests of youth as learners of new concepts, practices, and skills. Such teaching also recognizes that needs and interests are always mediated by membership in many different groups of people and by activities engaged in many different times, spaces, and relationships. However, even as we offer this expanded notion of what it means to be responsive in teaching, we recognize that the cultural knowledges and practices of some students—most often, students of color, English language learners and recent arrivals to the United States, or students from low-income homes and communities—are often unrecognized or dismissed in attempts to build best practices, especially at the secondary level.

With these issues in mind, we offer a review of different perspectives on culturally responsive pedagogy and examples of culturally responsive pedagogy drawn from classrooms in which we have worked. To organize our review of the most important studies of culturally responsive pedagogy,

we categorize studies into three different current perspectives on what it means to engage in culturally responsive pedagogy:

1. Culturally responsive pedagogy should use students' experiences as a *bridge* to conventional content and literacy learning.
2. Culturally responsive pedagogy should teach youth how to *navigate* cultural and discursive communities.
3. Culturally responsive pedagogy should also draw from students' experiences to *challenge and reshape* the academic-content knowledge and literacy practices of the curriculum.

### **CRITICAL RESEARCH ON CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY: A REVIEW**

#### **Cultural Responsiveness as a Tool for Building Bridges**

From this perspective, it is important to respond to the cultural backgrounds of all students to build bridges from knowledge and Discourses often marginalized in school settings to the learning of conventional academic knowledges and Discourses. Much of this work draws from cognitive and sociocognitive perspectives that seek to activate learners' prior knowledges and connect their existing knowledge to the target concepts. However, scholars who write from culturally responsive bridging perspectives would argue that the prior knowledge of nonmainstream learners often is either not understood or not acknowledged as valid and valuable (Moll, Veléz-Ibañez, & Greenberg, 1989).

Much of the work in this area focuses on making available to teachers the rich funds of knowledge and cultural practices that youth from nonmainstream backgrounds might bring to school (e.g., Heath, 1983; Moll, 1994; Moll et al., 1989). Once teachers learn about the different forms of prior knowledge or the different discursive practices their students might bring to their classrooms, they can then build bridges between the mainstream academic knowledge and discourse, and the knowledge and discourse that students bring to classrooms (e.g., Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999; Heath, 1983; Hudicourt-Barnes, 2003; Lee, 1993; Lee & Fradd, 1999; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Warren, Ballenger, Ogonowski, Rosebery, & Hudicourt-Barnes, 2001). In this perspective, these bridges from nonmainstream to mainstream thus provide opportunities to learn mainstream forms of knowledge and discourse, while also making a space for voices and experiences that have not always been heard in classrooms (Gutiérrez et al., 1999).

In each of the preceding studies, researchers found, to varying degrees, that students showed gains in academic content learning as a result of the particular practice the teacher enacted. For example, Lee (1993) studied the use of *signifying* as a way to teach literary devices often used to interpret canonical literature. *Signifying*, as defined by Lee, is an African American discourse pattern practiced in many African American homes. To signify means to "speak with innuendo and double meanings, to play rhetorically upon the meaning and sounds of words, and to be quick and often witty in one's responses" (Lee, 1993, p. 11). Signifying, Lee argues, serves as a tool for defining oneself as an African American; it is a tool for achieving status and recognition, and a way of taking an insider role in many African American communities. Lee engaged youth in signifying practices that exploited the use of irony and metaphor, among other literary elements, to teach Shakespearean works. Lee's mixed-method design demonstrated the process of enacting the practice, how young people in her classrooms understood the practices, and the posttreatment learning gains that young people demonstrated, which were significant and broad. The work of the Cheche Konan group (Warren, Rosebery, & Conant, 1994; Warren et al., 2001) demonstrates similar gains in both student engagement and conventional academic concept learning, as does Moll and colleagues' (1989; 1994) work with teachers and students in the Southwest. In fact, each of the studies in this bridging perspective demonstrated gains in student engagement and participation. Few of the studies, however, measured student learning gains on content knowledge in explicit ways.

### **Cultural Responsiveness as Tool for Navigating Discourse Communities**

This perspective argues that culturally responsive pedagogies should teach youth with varieties of cultural backgrounds how to navigate academic communities, such as school content areas, academic disciplines, or professions. This navigation is meant to equip students with access to knowledge and language conventions of different communities, so that youth can successfully navigate across those communities. This navigation needs to address the cultural values and norms of particular communities, such as knowing when it is appropriate for children and youth to ask questions or engage adults in debate (Heath, 1983; Philips, 1972). Navigation, however, in this perspective, needs also to address the different ways of talking, reading, and writing (the Discourses) within a community, such as understanding what types of oral and written texts are valued in a community (Delpit, 1988; Deyhle, 1991) or how different skills might be used to make meaning

across communities (Lee, 1993; Moje, Collazo, Carrillo, & Marx, 2001; New London Group, 1996).

At the secondary level, this suggests a need to focus in particular on crossing the discursive boundaries posed by the different disciplines, or school content areas, as students progress into deeper and deeper, or more and more specialized texts of those areas (Hicks, 1995-1996; Hinchman & Young, 2001; Hinchman & Zalewski, 2001; Lemke, 1990; Luke, 2001; Moje, Ciechanowski, et al., 2004; New London Group, 1996). Research in this area explores youths' understandings and insights regarding their discipline-specific studies, considering the matches and mismatches in several aspects of classroom discourses. Researchers with this perspective claim that students must learn to navigate subject-specific discourse, as well as the more tacit meanings of classroom discourse. For instance, Lampert and Blunk (1998) investigated the relationships between talk and mathematics, including the ways teachers mediate students' understandings via classroom talk. Noting students' claims to understand material discussed in class, Hinchman and Zalewski (2001) explained that students' claim that "she puts it in such hard words" on tests reflected students' sense that, whereas they understood content in class lectures and discussions, something was different, and more difficult, about reading social studies material on tests. They theorized that this complaint may have reflected that the negotiation of meaning that takes place during classroom discussion makes meaning seem more accessible to students. Such negotiation cannot take place during text reading, especially that which occurs during a test. Students' reported difficulty may also have hinted of less familiarity with, and perhaps greater complexity of, the written discourse of the social studies test.

Some educators who work from this position also seek to make evident the power hierarchies inherent in school learning and in the different professions and disciplines outside of secondary schools (Luke, 2001; Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000; New London Group, 1996). For example, Lemke (1990) discovered that classroom discourse constructed a mystique that made science content accessible only to some students. Hinchman and Young (2001) discovered students who were silenced because they had understandings of discussion participation that disagreed with those of teachers and other class members. We have found that no studies have measured student gains as a result of treatments constructed with this perspective in mind, in part because the goal of such work is not to measure what students have learned according to mainstream perspectives, but to uncover the ways that power operates within discourse communities to silence or control certain language practices and to introduce

possibilities for alternative ways of thinking, talking, reading, and writing the content and processes of various disciplines.

### **Culturally Responsiveness as a Tool for Social (and Epistemological) Change**

Culturally responsive pedagogy should also use students' experiences to challenge and reshape the academic-content knowledge and literacy practices of the curriculum (Moje et al., 2001; Lankshear, 1997; Mahiri, 2003; Morrell, 2002). This perspective on culturally responsive pedagogy argues that it is not enough to bring cultural experiences into classrooms as a way of helping students to connect more effectively to new ideas or as a way of engaging and motivating students, despite the fact that these are important aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy. Instead, this perspective wants to make a permanent space in the classrooms and schools for knowledges and Discourses that have been traditionally marginalized. Educators working from this perspective want to integrate everyday knowledge and ways of knowing of all students with the knowledges and ways of knowing that have been valued in academic settings. The goal here is both to claim a space for marginalized voices and to construct new knowledge to the benefit of all parties involved in the educational process.

Very few studies of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) that challenges and reshapes the curriculum have been conducted, in part because so few classrooms represent this form of CRP. In fact, most studies that have been done have been conducted outside of classroom spaces (e.g., Barton, 2001; Duncan-Andrade, 2003; Edwards & Eisenhart, 2002). Some classroom-based studies in this area are paving the way, however. Morrell (2002), for example, reports on work with urban students in Los Angeles, who engaged in social action projects that required their learning conventional writing skills, historical analysis skills, and critical sociology. Similarly, Kirkland and Tate (2003) describe and analyze their work with young African American students in an English literature classroom as they used, analyzed, and critiqued hip hop and rap music, both as a way to learn critical analysis skills and to become critically literate.

What all three of these perspectives share is that they see culturally responsive pedagogy as a tool for enhancing the learning of all students. The type of tool depends on one's perspective on what schooling should accomplish. It is possible, of course, to engage in one version of culturally responsive pedagogy and reject or overlook the other versions. Like many of our colleagues, however, we do not see any of these perspectives as mutually exclusive. Instead, we take the stance that best practice in culturally responsive pedagogy brings together all of these perspectives. Indeed,

many of the same scholars are represented in each of the three perspectives we present in the following review. We assert that this cross-representation is not a matter of indecisiveness on the part of the scholars, but is rather a function of the belief that a carefully constructed culturally responsive pedagogy could promote each of these ends (i.e., bridging, navigating, challenging, and reshaping content knowledge). In other words, there is value in learning mainstream forms of knowledge at the same time that one may work toward transforming that knowledge and generating new understandings of the world, informed by multiple perspectives and communicated via many different discursive practices.

With these perspectives in mind, we now turn to a description of some of the culturally responsive practices we have observed in classrooms in which we study and/or teach.

### **WHAT DOES CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY LOOK LIKE IN CLASSROOMS?**

In what follows, each of us offers exemplars drawn from urban content-area classrooms. We chose these classrooms because we believe that they exemplify many of the different perspectives on responsive pedagogy that we have laid out. None of the classrooms represented completely captures all aspects of CRP, but we believe that few, if any, teachers (including ourselves) ever have perfected completely and uniformly responsive pedagogy. These teachers, however, represent many of what we later describe as the *principled practices* of cultural responsiveness.

#### **Exemplars from an Urban Mathematics Class: Kathy's Case**

Kathy's case is drawn from her work on a newly established mathematics and literacy research collaborative in a medium-size urban school district in the northeast United States. With roughly 22,000 students, recent data suggest that this school district is 46.2% African American, 44.5% European American, 6.7% Hispanic/Latino, and 2.5% Native American. Students with limited English proficiency make up 5.6% of the school district's population, and 68.4% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The purpose of our collaboration is to understand what mathematics teachers need to know to support students' development of mathematical communication required by the 2000 reform of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*. In particular, the new communication standard represents a dramatic shift in classroom focus for secondary school teachers by requir-

ing that instructional programs "enable all students to organize and consolidate their mathematical thinking through communication; communicate their mathematical thinking coherently and clearly to peers, teachers, and others; analyze and evaluate the mathematical thinking and strategies of others; and use the language of mathematics to express mathematical ideas precisely" (National Council of Teachers and Mathematics, 2000). We are working with teachers through classroom observation and study-group collaboration to explore literacy demands and to develop literacy scaffolding tools, cases for teacher education tools, and a library of exemplary student work.

Dawn Williams, a European American seventh-grade teacher in a middle school in our collaborative, is an experienced teacher who has taught in the school for many years. In sharp contrast to the district average, in this middle school, 82% of students are African American or Latino, 89% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 20% of the student body has been identified as having special educational needs; the school has been designated as among the lowest performing in the state. Kathy began observing in Dawn's classroom to gain a sense of the workings of the new mathematics curriculum. The class was taught by Dawn with the help of a special education teacher because, of the 23 students in her class, 5 students were identified as having special education needs. Dawn knows the students well; she attends sporting events and runs an after-school math club that does community service projects. Her language is sprinkled with smiles and affectionate terms, such as "honey" and "sweetie," to both boys and girls; she seems to enjoy her work and to like her students. Students respond in kind, asking her about upcoming school and community events, and volunteering often in class.

The curriculum adopted by Dawn's school district was organized so that students used mathematics in real-world simulations. The school district adopted materials developed by Michigan State University's Connected Mathematics Project (CMP) to facilitate this (Frey, Fitzgerald, Friel, Lappan, & Phillips, 2002). For example, in Dawn's seventh-grade class, a major organizing theme for a portion of the school year was the study of variables and patterns. Students conducted and charted the results of investigations outlined by the program or developed by the teacher, or they read about and charted others' exploits.

Dawn followed the principle of helping her students to use mathematics for problem solving in real-life situations in the activities she designed for the students as well. For instance, percentages were included in her district's seventh-grade curriculum but were not addressed explicitly in the CMP materials she was using. To address the use of percentages in real life, Dawn orchestrated an activity for students to complete in pairs, in



which they imagined they were going to a restaurant with a certain amount of money to spend and needed to budget their orders, taxes, and tips accordingly.

Dawn began the lesson by saying,

"I am going to give a menu and an order check that would be used by a waiter or waitress to each pair. Figure out what you can afford to order, including the total for all the food you want to order, the tax, and the tip. If you look at the menu with me, you can see that, in this restaurant, lots of the food comes with extra side orders. Make sure you know what each entry says overall."

The menu given to each dyad read, "Larry's Lunch Place." It included entries for several "lunch specials," including roast turkey with dressing, gravy, and cranberry sauce; veggie *quesadillas* made of whole-wheat tortillas, tomatoes, peppers, and three kinds of cheeses; and chicken tenders with baked potato, coleslaw, and barbecue sauce. Other specials included meatloaf, spaghetti, and grilled chicken. The menu also included a section on burgers, seafood, desserts, and beverages. The order check received by each group included a two-column chart, with one column for items ordered and another for price.

Dawn said, "At Larry's Place, one of the specials is a platter. Who knows what a platter is?" No one volunteered an answer, so Dawn explained, "A platter is a plate with a main food and several side dishes."

Dawn asked again, "What is a combo? Do you see that on the menu? What does it come with?"

Charisse raised her hand and offered, "Fish and chips."

Dawn asked, "What are 'chips' with 'fish and chips'? Not potato chips, right?"

Boomer said, "French fries."

Dawn repeated, "Good. French fries."

To this end-of-the-day class, she explained, "The chocolate cake is \$1.50. With ice cream, it's not \$1.50 plus \$1.95, but just \$1.95, which isn't clear on this menu. Also, what is a root beer float?"

Monique raised her hand and replied, "Root beer soda and ice cream in a glass."

Dawn said, "Okay, good."

Putting an overhead transparency onto the projector in the front middle of the room, Dawn pointed out the handwriting on an order form and said, "Here are the kinds of things my family ordered," explaining what she, her daughter, and her son decided to order, with all the side dishes, desserts, and beverages as a model for the class. She showed the students how to

estimate the cost quickly to see whether she would have enough money and asked what would happen if they ordered food they could not afford—to which students' response was laughter to indicate their understanding that this would be an inappropriate thing to do. Then she actually totaled up the items her family had ordered, and showed where and how she determined the tax—a process that was a review for students.

Dawn later explained that because of her experiences with her own children's preferences for fast-food, restaurants and knowing about the high poverty rate typical of students in her schools, she had been a little worried that her students would not have experienced restaurants with menus, tax, and tip. But completing this lesson with other sections of the same class, meeting earlier in the day, belied her fears and suggested the importance of not generalizing too much about the cultural relevance of a restaurant simulation, and instead respecting the different funds of knowledge that individuals' might bring to such discussions (e.g., Heath, 1983; Moje et al., 2000; Moll et al., 1989, 1994). Indeed, many of her students talked about having relatives who worked in restaurants, and the question of what percentage to tip was generated much discussion within groups.

The class Kathy observed met at the end of the day, and Dawn reported that she had learned from earlier classes that students had some difficulty interpreting the menu offerings of figuring out how to complete the order form. They tended to read only the heading for the menu item, without reading the side dishes that accompanied the main entrée. Dawn reported that her students also simply did not know what some of the food was. Not knowing whether this was due to inexperience anchored in culture or age, she'd learned that she could eliminate the need for answering a significant number of questions by providing students with a brief explanation of some menu entries and by modeling completion of the order form so that students could see how it was done.

Students worked diligently as Dawn and a special education teacher circulated to answer questions and to check students' mathematics, quietly totaling and estimating tax and totals as students talked with one another. When they found errors, they gently guided students back to their problem solving, pointing to segments that needed recalculation. Most students totaled orders appropriately. They struggled a bit with determining tax and tip, percentage problems that Dawn predicted would cause them the greatest challenge, and that were the focus of the experience.

When all the pairs had completed their work, Dawn went to her overhead projector in the front of the room and led another review. "I'm nosy. How many people picked the meatloaf as their choice for lunch?" No one raised a hand. "How about the burger?" Several students raised their hand, a tally Dawn noted on her transparency next to the item name. Several

other students had ordered the *quesadillas*, and still others, the chicken tenders. "What kind of graph could I make that best shows the numbers of orders per item?"

LaBron raised his hand and offered, "Bar graph," and Dawn responded, "Good," and drew the beginnings of a small bar graph on her transparency to show how it might work.

Dawn noted, "I estimated totals to check your work, and found out that Boomer left an item out of his total. How did you complete your estimates?"

Madelaine explained, "I rounded to the closest 5s and 10s and added to see the total."

Dawn again replied, "Good. And what is tax on food in our state?"

José said, "Seven percent."

Dawn followed with, "So for every dollar, I pay 7 cents, right? And how do I figure it out? How do I write 7% in a decimal?"

Monique replied, "Point zero seven."

Dawn wrote this on her transparency and said, "How do you determine tax?"

Jose said, "Put subtotal in the calculator and multiple by .07."

Dawn said, "Good. But then look at your answer. If it is more than two decimals, you round up, right? So what does \$1.2999 become?"

Charisse volunteered, "\$1.30."

Kathy also observed a CMP group problem-solving activity. Students had worked in groups of three on the preceding day to record the number of jumping jacks that one person could complete in 2 minutes. For each group, one student had done the actual jumping jacks, while another counted the number of jumping jacks completed, and a third person recorded the number at 10-second intervals. Dawn showed the students how to record and construct written interpretations of the experiment. After a full class period of group investigation, she began the next day's instruction by putting a copy of a chart recording the responses from one group's investigation onto an overhead transparency for all to see as visual support for an interactive, whole-class explanation of how to put the variables onto a coordinating graph, with students recording definitions of coordinating graph, independent variable, and dependent variable in their notebooks as they worked.

While it might be argued that the jumping jacks experiment represented knowledge that was more a school-based than real-life orientation, the action was easily imitated by all students to some extent or another. The activity also had the potential to result in competitive teasing, but the supportive environment of Dawn's classroom did not allow this to happen. The activity was one that students found fun, especially as they noted the

different rates at which students completed their jumping jacks and why, recognizing and celebrating different students' capabilities as they worked. Moreover, it was an experiment that allowed the students to see a relationship between rate and time as they recorded the progression of numbers of jumping jacks on a graph. They could talk with each other about why this had happened, talking their way into understanding the workings of tables and graphs as they worked (Davis, Jones, & Pearn, 1994; Lampert & Blunk, 1998).

Dawn's affectionate relationships with her students produced a classroom within which everyone was engaged and willing to share answers in front of peers (Dillon, 1989; Moje, 1996). As a seventh-grade teacher who knew that her students had likely not engaged in extensive reading, writing, and note taking, Dawn also helped them begin to understand how to do this, using a set of experiences that she knew they would find engaging (Draper, 2002). Dawn began her mathematical explanations with students' explanations for why the numbers progressed as they did, scaffolding their efforts to translate these into written text that would be acceptable for communicating such interpretations to others, and encouraging them to share their efforts with one another so that they could develop a sense of appropriate variations (Luke, 2001; Moje et al., 2000; New London Group, 1996). The special education teacher also helped to support students' literacy development, by noting areas with which students seemed to be struggling and helping students to understand practice their skills in these areas.

Following suggestions in the CMP curriculum, Dawn invited students to participate in experiences that would move them through a problem set to problem solving, graphic representation, and, eventually, algebraic representation, a tenuous trajectory for many students to follow (MacGregor & Stacey, 1995). Such efforts represented a classroom in transition, moving from a techniques-based curriculum to an inquiry-based one, scaffolding students' reading and writing efforts on the way toward inviting them to generate ideas more independently (Siegel, Borasi, & Fonzi, 1998). Thus, Dawn's classroom represents one in which the teacher was responsive to students' needs and interests by drawing from real-world experiences to which she felt all students could relate. She was not, however, explicitly focused on students' cultural backgrounds. The teacher in the next cases we present draws from both ethnic and youth cultures to build a responsive science pedagogy.

### **Exemplars from Urban Science Classrooms: Elizabeth's Cases**

Elizabeth's cases are drawn from work done by a curriculum development, enactment, and research team comprised of Detroit public school teachers

and administrators, and University of Michigan curriculum developers and researchers (Marx, Blumenfeld, Krajcik, & Soloway, 1997). The Detroit Public Schools are populated primarily by African American students (91.1%), followed by Latino/a students (4%), European American students (3.7%), Asian and Pacific Island students (0.9%), and American Indian students (0.2%). The average percentage of students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program throughout the district is 70%, although the percentage ranges from 35 to 90% at the schools in our project. The teachers who participate in our project represent a mix of ethnic, racial, and social-class groups, but the teachers in the subset represented in this chapter are African American and Latino/a in ethnic background. We work closely with these teachers, meeting for bimonthly professional and curriculum development work, and we videotape in classrooms and collect student and teacher work as artifacts of student learning. Student learning is also measured via pre- and postunit tests on science content and process knowledge, as well as on several performance tasks administered throughout the unit. We also interview a subset of students on their content knowledge, attitudes about and toward science, and strategies for sense making in the curriculum.

Our work is focused on science and scientific literacy learning in the middle and high school grades. In particular, we develop and enact "project-based" science units. The idea behind project-based science (or any project-based curricula) is that student learning is framed and motivated by real-world questions that are of interest to real people in real places. For example, our curricula revolve around questions such as "What affects the quality of air in my community?" (air quality—chemistry); "Can good friends make you sick?" (communicable diseases—biology); "What is the water like in my river?" (water quality—chemistry and ecology). Thus, the curricula themselves are an attempt to build *curricula* that are responsive to youths' everyday worlds because they are situated in the youths' communities, relationships, and physical spaces. Although the questions are designed to draw from the actual world of experience youth might have, whether or not the questions are of immediate interest to the youth in any given space and time is always an issue. In fact, it is an issue that begs a culturally responsive pedagogy, as the teachers in the group routinely demonstrate.

For example, Ms. Hall, a seventh-grade science teacher recently adapted the communicable diseases curriculum (which revolves around the question, "How can good friends make you sick?") because she believed that adding a particular reading at the start of the unit would better connect with the life worlds of the young people she teaches than would the article that had been included in the curriculum reader. Ms. Hall also believed that the article she had chosen would motivate the students to

engage more thoughtfully in the activities—including the remaining reading and writing activities—of the curriculum.

Specifically, rather than beginning with an article on Nkosi, a 12-year-old African boy who was, at the time, living with AIDS, Ms. Hall decided to begin by having the students in her class read a teen magazine article on body piercing and tattooing. Although Ms. Hall valued the Nkosi article (and did have students read it during their next activity), she assessed her students' interests and experiences as more connected to the piercing and tattooing article. She knew that most of them knew people with piercings and tattoos, and that many of them desired piercings and tattoos. She also worried that her students would not be able to connect cognitively or affectively to Nkosi's experience because he lived in Africa, rather than the United States, and because the context for living with AIDS/HIV in Africa is so different from that of the United States. She did not assume that the students' African heritage would build a natural connection; instead, she looked for something that related to their particular everyday lived experience. Furthermore, Ms. Hall assessed the piercing and tattooing article, and found that it introduced many of the concepts that would be studied in the curriculum (including bacteria and the spread of infectious agents). She determined that the combination of connecting to students' interests, experiences, and desires, together with the important content introduced, made a good rationale for beginning with the piercing and tattooing article.

To introduce the article, Ms. Hall asked the students to write a response to the question of whether teens should be required to have parental consent before obtaining a body piercing or tattoo. According to Ms. Hall, the students immediately set to work writing a response and appeared to be engaged in putting their opinions in print. Then, without discussing the issue in detail, Ms. Hall asked the students to read the article. Following the reading, Ms. Hall led a whole-class discussion on the article. Students were highly engaged in this discussion, voicing their opinions and using both personal experience and information from the article to argue their points. Ms. Hall played the role of prober and facilitator during the discussion, offering neither her opinion nor any correction of students' views. She simply asked students to use information from the article to support their thinking. Ms. Hall then concluded the activity with another journal writing exercise; students wrote intently and appeared to be interested in getting their opinions down.

In the activity, then, students' experiences were integrated with the social and scientific concepts they had read about in the article. Several of the students raised points about bacteria that were central aspects of the unit (and that they would study in later weeks). Their focus on bacteria in

this article established a ground for their later investigations of the growth of bacteria in different parts of the school. And the next day, Ms. Hall returned to the curriculum as laid out by our team, asking students to read and discuss the article about Nkosi. She reported in our team meeting that she felt that her students had a better sense of the curriculum and the question, "Can good friends make you sick?" after reading the piercing and tattooing article, despite its seemingly loose connection to the driving question. Thus, Ms. Hall made a judgment about how to draw on, build, and maintain students' interest and knowledge throughout the curriculum unit. Although curriculum developers had included the Nkosi article in the hope of interesting students in someone of their own age living with a communicable disease, Ms. Hall recognized that the experiences of a boy living on another continent, no matter the age, would seem far removed to her students. She also knew that her students were familiar with the term *bacteria*, although they probably could not distinguish bacteria from *viruses*, at least in scientific terms. The article would build on a basic level of content knowledge, challenge some naive conceptions about both bacteria and piercing and tattooing, and would set a stage for further development of the concept of bacteria. Thus, Ms. Hall's practice responded to students as cultural and social beings of a certain age, with certain experiences and pressures, and certain levels of content knowledge.

In another exchange in Ms. Hall's classroom, Ms. Hall demonstrated her attention to the unique discourse of science by making connections from everyday experiences of the youth to the terminology they needed to learn in order to "talk (and read and write) science" (see Lemke, 1990). In the following discussion of the terms *reactants* and *products*, which the students had been asked to write about in their bell work (journal writing that they do at the beginning of each class period to help them focus on the day's activity), Mrs. Hall drew on the students' experiences in a peer discourse community to help them navigate the discourse of science. She also used humor to engage them in the conversation and performed her interpretation of a typical peer exchange in that community as a way to make the words more concrete and dramatic. The exchange begins with Ms. Hall focusing the students' attention on the words that they need to learn:

MS. HALL: Think about the word *react*. In order for something to react, it has to interact with somethin' else. For example, if I look at LaShayna, and LaShayna was lookin' at me like—(tilts her head to the side, rolls her eyes, and flips her hand up in a dismissive gesture, flips her head and rolls her eyes once more, this time twirling her hand, with one finger pointed to the ceiling, the class laughs and looks at

*LaShayna*)—and then, I'm lookin' at *LaShayna*, now I could do one of two things. Tell me if I do this, am I reactin'?

Ms. Hall walks across the room, past *LaShayna*, without looking in *LaShayna's* direction. A few students say "No," but others say, "Yes, yes."

MS. HALL: Yes, I'm reacting by what?

STUDENT: Just walking away.

MS. HALL: Just walking away. Okay, so, what will be the product of me just walking away?

STUDENT: No beatin' [inaudible].

MS. HALL: No, what would be the end results of that?

STUDENT: No fighting.

STUDENT: No violence.

STUDENT: No fighting.

MS. HALL: No fighting, no violence, things like that. But what if I did this, she's (*gestures and rolls her eyes*) and I'm like—(*again acts out a response, but this time she twists her body and gestures "back" at the LaShayna; she continues her dance-like, gesture-filled response*). Now is there a reaction, is there something goin' on between me an' *LaShayna*?

STUDENTS: Yes.

MS. HALL: Okay, so we're reactin' to one another. And so what happens, we just keep doin', keep doin it, keep doin' it.

STUDENT: That would look kinda stupid. (*Everyone laughs, including Ms. Hall.*)

MS. HALL: Okay, or, or I just start goin' (*raises her voice and puts a different, somewhat surly note in it*), "What you lookin' at? Don't be lookin' at me. I'm lookin' at you." And we keep goin' back and forth, we keep goin' back and forth. (*Students are laughing and looking around the room at each other.*) Is there a reaction goin' on in that situation?

STUDENTS: Yessss.

MS. HALL: What's the end product of that?

STUDENTS: A bad situation.

STUDENTS: Maybe a fight.

STUDENTS: A argument.



STUDENTS: Conflict.

MS. HALL: Maybe an argument. Conflict . . . Reactants are saying what? Two things react together and then you can get an end product from that. For example, I'm a farmer. Jerry here is my sheep. (*laughter from the students*) He's baa, baa, baaing all the way around. And then I go up to him, and I, uh, shear his wool. It's called shearing when you take the wool off of a sheep.

STUDENT: [some sort of question that is inaudible]

MS. HALL: (*Laughs.*) No, no. Listen to the scenario, though. Okay, I take his wool. His wool doesn't just come to you when you have on a sweater, which is your product, it doesn't come directly from the sheep to you. What happens in-between, just give me one, I have wool, plus what.

STUDENTS: Well, you have to do the carpenting and all that stuff.

MS. HALL: The carpenting? Okay, don't get mixed up with, okay, I understood. I got the wool. What has to happen between the wool and the sweater?

STUDENT: It has to be cleaned?

MS. HALL: It has to be cleaned. What else?

STUDENTS: Put together.

MS. HALL: Put together. We look at that as the things that react, and then my end product is the what?

STUDENTS: A sweater. A coat.

MS. HALL: A sweater or a coat. Think about this, now based upon what I just told you. When I say "baking soda plus vinegar and I get carbon dioxide and water," what are my reactants in that situation?

STUDENTS: The uh, it'll start to bubble?

MS. HALL: No, I didn't say, "What happens?" I said, "What are my reactants?" Brian?

STUDENTS: Carbon dioxide?

MS. HALL: Uh, my reactants, the things that are reacting together?

BRIAN: Baking soda and vinegar?

MS. HALL: Baking soda and vinegar. (*Turns back to the boy who said "bubbling"*) You were on the right track because we saw that when they react together they do what?

STUDENT: Bubble

STUDENT: That's what we used in the volcano.

MS. HALL: And so, that's what we used, you're right, in the volcano. They *yield* carbon dioxide and water. Those are my products.

Ms. Hall's practice in this excerpt demonstrates four important aspects of CRP for young people in secondary school content areas. First, Ms. Hall saw her students as whole beings and engaged in practice that was responsive to them as cultural beings (e.g., using African American English in her performance), as youth (e.g., situating the scenario in the experiences of two young women), and as socially situated beings (e.g., performing a scenario that she had seen young people in the school engaged in on several occasions). Second, Ms. Hall's choices were not based on any of these qualities alone; that is, she did not choose a confrontational exchange on the basis of their race, age, social class, or geographic setting (an urban area). Nor did she assume that all the students would resonate with the scenario, as illustrated by her offering a second, and very different, scenario of a farmer shearing sheep.

Third, Ms. Hall was committed to developing students' understandings of content concepts and engaged in culturally responsive practice to support those understandings. She did not enact culturally responsive practice merely to draw the students' attention, although student engagement is a critical aspect of learning (e.g., Guthrie et al., 1996; Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983). Engagement for the purposes of entertaining or managing the classroom, however, is not a feature of CRP. As in Ms. Hall's performance, the connections made must be between students' experiences and the content concepts. This example illustrates a form of bridging pedagogy and also begins to develop a navigating pedagogy, as youth begin to see different discourse practices around the same general concepts. Ms. Hall's use of the words *reactant*, *reaction*, and *products* across everyday and scientific discourse communities begins to make evident for students the differences in discourse communities. Her emphasis on the word *yield* demonstrates her cueing to students that *yield* is a word they would use in a scientific discussion of reactants and products, rather than in an everyday discussion. In this exemplar, Ms. Hall does not engage in any explicitly transformative responsive pedagogy, because she does not ask the students to merge their everyday knowledge and discourse with that of scientific knowledge and discourse. Yet her practice is transformative in the sense that she makes a space for the everyday experiences of youth in her classroom, even as she draws from those experiences to build bridges to the content area concepts.

## PRINCIPLES OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE YOUTH LITERACY PEDAGOGY

Whether a particular practice is a best form of culturally responsive youth literacy pedagogy is, we believe, an open question. As illustrated in the literature review and the exemplars presented in the previous section, the construct of cultural responsiveness connotes practice that is so intimately tied to relationships, activities, spaces, and times, that few generalizations can be made about the specifics of best practice. We can, however, offer general *principles* for engaging in CRP. Examining cases of culturally responsive practice allows us to see how different teachers and different students together construct classroom content-area spaces and activities to support the learning of content and literacy skills, as well as the construction of new perspectives on content and literacy. Other teachers can learn from such cases and can modify the practices they read about for their own classrooms. However, some principles of practice can be drawn from our cases to provide a framework for engaging in culturally responsive practice with youth.

Drawing from these cases, and borrowing from David Moore's (Moje et al., 2000) notion of principled practices that are connected to particular contexts (or are "ecologically valid") for adolescent literacy (see also Hoffman & Duffy, 2001), we want to propose a set of principled practices for best culturally responsive practice when working with adolescent literacy learners across the content areas of the secondary school (high school and middle school). What follows are the principles we have derived:

1. *Culturally responsive pedagogy should begin with the formation of relationships between teachers and students.* Teachers who cheer for youth playing basketball, who know their students' families and neighborhoods, and who have a sense for the kinds of things particular students care about, have several advantages. A number of education researchers (Noddings, 1984;Sizer, 1992) have suggested the importance of forming relationships with students, particularly in secondary content-area literacy classrooms (Dillon, 1989; Moje, 1996). Teachers who build relationships can more easily construct explanations and orchestrate experiences suited to students' existing understandings. They also can more easily read students' responses to their initiations and negotiate accordingly. Finally, when students know that someone cares about them, they more easily empathize with and even become excited about the interests of that person; as a result, students are more likely to believe or buy into a teacher's assertion that it is important to know some particular content-related generalization or a particular pro-

cess (see Moje, 1996). The difficulty for many of us as teachers, however, is that we do not understand—and sometimes even devalue—cultural experiences that are different from our own, making responsive teaching difficult.

Dawn Williams, the seventh-grade mathematics teacher represented in the previous section has supportive relationships with her students. She builds these relationships by attending extracurricular sporting events and shows, meeting parents at these and other community events, and is offering an after-school club herself. She invites students to work in groups so that she can observe their interactions and approaches to shared efforts. She knows her students well enough to know when someone does not feel well, to recognize when someone is especially agitated, or to see the excitement in the eyes of someone who has just solved a difficult problem. Likewise, Ms. Hall knows her students well enough to draw from the different ethnic and youth cultural practices that will resonate with them. They draw from those practices to make connections across everyday and academic discourse communities.

2. *Culturally responsive pedagogy should recognize and be respectful of the many different cultural experiences that any one person can embody.* In other words, it is important that CRP not essentialize members of a cultural group by assuming that an individual possesses certain characteristics or engages in particular practices simply by virtue of being an identifiable member of a group. Ms. Hall, the science teacher we represented, illustrates this principle in two ways. First, she did not assume that her students would connect with Nkosi, the young African boy described in the curriculum reader article, simply because they were all of African heritage. Second, she did not assume that they would resonate with his experience because they were the same age as Nkosi when the article was written. Instead, she chose an article that she knew would be of interest to them because she knew something about their particular youth cultural experiences. She also did not assume that all of her students would connect with the confrontation scenario that she performed to illustrate reactants and products, and so offered a different scenario about sheep shearing, wool gathering, and sweater production as an alternative explanation, one that may have been far removed from many of her urban students' experiences, but that connected to experiences some of them have when visiting relatives in rural settings. She thus challenged and expanded their thinking at the same time that she connected to many of their everyday experiences.

This principle is also supported a variety of cultural theories and research studies that position culture and identity as dynamic, fluid, and hybrid (Bhabha, 1994; Luke & Luke, 1999; Rosaldo, 1999). According to these theories, it is problematic to position a member of a cultural group in

a particular way based on her cultural background, in part because cultures are always changing. Even in the most seemingly stable of cultures, it is dangerous to assume an essential set of practices for any given member of a cultural group, because individuals within a culture engage in a variety of experiences that shape their meaning making within those cultures. What is more, in a world in which access to information and transportation seems to grow exponentially, we cannot assume that people are members of only one cultural group. Access to the Internet, to popular cultures via television, movies, and music, and to actual experiences in spaces other than our own, make us all hybrid beings to some extent.

In addition to these theoretical perspectives, a number of classroom-based studies have complicated notions of what it means to be culturally responsive (Fecho, 1998; Obidah, 1998; Sarris, 1993), particularly in diverse classrooms, or in classrooms where teacher and students are of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Fecho, a European American teacher, for example, wrote of his own stumbles at what he thought would be a culturally responsive practice with African American students in a large, urban school district. Despite Fecho's extensive experience of working with African American students and of living in that district over 20 years, students nevertheless rejected his attempt to engage them in a particular piece of African American poetry, claiming that he mocked them in his efforts. Sarris (1983) presented a similar study of a white teacher working with American Indian students, who pointedly rejected her attempt to engage them in reading Indian folk tales, explaining that these were not their stories (the stories were stories told in their tribe, but Sarris reveals the complications of white teachers attempting to take up a group's cultural tales as part of the classroom experience).

3. *Culturally responsive pedagogy works with youth to develop applications and to construct understandings that are relevant to them.* Ms. Hall, the science teacher, followed this principle by organizing instruction around questions of interest to her students. Ms. Williams, the mathematics teacher, showed students the helpful connections between what they could observe around them and mathematical representations. Students responded to both initiations with energy, interest, and enthusiasm. They learned content typical for their grade level, and did so in ways that fostered their understanding of application.

A variety of educators have recommended such approaches. For example, the Wiggington (1977) Foxfire approach suggested negotiation of topics for inquiry around students' community realities. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) recommended inviting students to engage in inquiry around essential questions. Such approaches do not obviate the need for teachers' subject-specific expertise; teachers can add their expertise to the

mix of perspectives discovered during the exploration and reporting processes. However, such problem-based pursuit of essential questions can put teachers in the position of sometimes not knowing answers to questions that will come up when students move forward to answer their own questions. Teachers can also find that their expertise gets challenged and even changed as a result of an insightful student comment, which is one of the benefits of engaging in pedagogy that responds to and incorporates students' cultural, ethnic, and community experiences.

4. *CRP depends on knowledge of discipline-related concepts.* This principle is important for two reasons. Too often, CRP is interpreted as drilling students who lack the cultural and linguistic capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) on facts to help them *compete* with those who hold such capital. This sort of practice is often justified by referring to Delpit's (1988) argument that nonmainstream (or nondominant) learners need access to the "culture of power," and do not need to be taught fluency or creativity. A careful reading of Delpit, however, illustrates that such an interpretation is an inaccurate reading of her argument; Delpit argues for teaching youth—of all cultural backgrounds—the skills necessary to engage with different sets of practices, and to traverse and negotiate different cultural spaces, especially those of the dominant power group. She does not advocate drilling students in such skills, however. Rather, she argues for teaching them skills of discourse communities other than their own by linking to deep concepts within those discourse communities, and by comparing and connecting those practices to communities in which the students are fluent and skilled.

This principled practice is important for a second reason. In contrast to the drilling method that sometimes is justified on cultural grounds, another interpretation of CRP is often to search for any and all cultural experiences to bring into the classroom, whether or not they connect to the content under study in deep ways. Such an approach is of limited value, however; although students may become temporarily engaged in an activity that may resonate with their cultural or social experiences, they often make few, if any, connections between the culturally situated experiences and the target concepts. For deep content learning to occur, the experiences drawn upon need to be relevant to the target concepts.

Each of these teachers illustrates this important principled practice. Ms. Hall, for example, links specific words and phrases (e.g., *reactant* and *product*) to youths' experiences and to their linguistic knowledge of words such as *react*, *reaction*, *end result*, *end product*, and *product*, all the way emphasizing the subtle differences in language (e.g., *reactant*, *yields*). Ms. Williams discusses the unique qualities of explanation writing in mathematics by emphasizing particular inferences associated with mathematical representation. She distinguishes between the kind of explaining that students might

do to one another and that which they would do to represent and draw conclusions about causes for change over time.

5. *CRP invites youth to participate in multiple and varied discipline-specific, cross-discourse experiences that include reading, writing, speaking, listening and performing in the service of increasingly sophisticated knowledge construction.* As has been argued by a number of scholars, it is important to provide students with the opportunity to construct and represent understandings across different forms and genres of representation, including different types of print texts, as well as images, performances, electronic texts, and oral language (Eisner, 1994; Epstein, 1994; Gardner, 1983; Lemke, 1990). It is also important to engage students in communicating their understanding within and across different discourse communities (Hicks, 1995-1996; Lemke, 1990; Luke, 2001). CRP makes clear that no single form of representation—even print—can convey an author's meaning transparently or completely (Eisner, 1994). CRP makes clear to students that knowledge is best produced when people explore the world and experiment with many different ways that different cultural groups (ethnic, disciplinary, age, gender) use to represent their understandings.

The teachers and curricula that we have represented here provide exemplars of this principled practice. Ms. Hall and her science colleagues in Detroit provide opportunities for students to engage with a number of different forms and discourses. They engage students in actual investigations, such as the investigation on bacteria growth. They take walks throughout the community, during which the students take photographs to provide evidence of air pollution. Students simultaneously record their observations on paper and report on what they observed in class. They conduct a series of experiments to determine whether air is matter and to examine the amount of particulate matter in the air around their school or emitted by different models of cars.

The classes also take trips to the river to collect data, or when field trips are prohibitive because of time and funding, students watch videos of the teachers at the river taking water samples and testing the water that they have brought back to the room in buckets for the students to test. They also "interact" with the river via a CD-ROM activity developed to provide a simulated river walk. In the communicable disease unit, students not only conduct their own investigation of bacteria, but they also engage in simulated epidemiology studies and develop contact maps to trace the spread of a simulated disease throughout their classroom.

Throughout each of these units, the students read not only from the curriculum readers developed to accompany these specific curricula but also from Internet articles they search for with modeling from the teacher using a strategy developed from a combination of several different content-

area literacy strategies. They also write in journals (as illustrated in exemplars from Ms. Hall's class), at times writing in words, and at times representing their understanding in drawings, charts, tables, and graphs. The students work in both small and whole-class groupings, talking through ideas and critiquing each other's representations through a strategy the teachers label "museum walks," wherein each group displays its work and the students walk through the room, observing and commenting on each other's work.

In every case, the students practice communicating their ideas in multiple forms of representation, often with the task of having to translate across the forms as they move from raw data to drawing, to table, to graph, and finally, to verbal explanation. And in each case, the teachers encourage students to use their own words, their prior knowledge, their everyday experiences and their experiences, with science in the world and in the classroom to make sense of and to represent their understandings. At times, the teachers ask students to generate cartoons, posters, or rap lyrics to convey their understanding of the science, providing students an opportunity to convey ideas in forms familiar or engaging to them. The teachers also, however, make a concerted effort to help students understand the conventions of scientific Discourse, emphasizing that the way one might convey an idea to a friend or to one's mother is not necessarily how one would convey the same information to another scientist.

CRP also makes evident that the different forms and discursive practices valued in the discipline are human constructions, established over time as useful ways of communicating information and ideas, but are not necessary outgrowths of knowledge production in a given area. CRP thus makes clear to students that useful knowledge can be generated and communicated in forms not always valued in the different disciplines. Indeed, a CRP looks for other ways of knowing and representing the world, and engages students in those ways as a means of both validating multiple ways of knowing and of deepening the learning of traditional content concepts.

6. *CRP invites youth to develop and express new understandings of the world, understandings that merge mainstream content concepts with everyday knowledge in alternative, creative forms.* This is perhaps the most difficult principled culturally responsive practice for secondary school content teachers to enact. This principle requires a great deal of time to explore multiple perspectives on information, and requires that teachers have the background knowledge in their content area to be able to allow flexible interpretations, without promoting the construction of understandings that are, quite simply, inaccurate. Examples of this principled practice are illustrated by each of the teachers we have presented, who encourage their students to question the data or claims presented in the curriculum and in their community.



### **REMAINING QUESTIONS ABOUT CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY FOR YOUTH LITERACY LEARNERS**

What does it look like when CRP encourages students to merge everyday knowledge with academic knowledge to construct new understandings of the world? Most forms of CRP that have been enacted and studied in classrooms have been bridging or negotiating pedagogies. As we have argued previously, these forms are not exclusive of a challenging and reshaping form of CRP, because new knowledge cannot be generated if current knowledges are not understood, and if young people cannot navigate across or negotiate the many different discourse communities they experience in any given secondary school day.

That said, however, we believe that there is a great deal of work to be done in literacy research, in teacher education, and in the content areas to support teachers in enacting CRPs that encourage young people to question existing academic knowledge and to apply academic knowledge to issues and problems in their own communities. We need to design experiments that investigate both the processes (teaching and learning) and products (i.e., learning gains) of such forms of CRP. Such work needs to consider not only how teachers interact with students but also how teachers facilitate students interacting with one another. We also need to understand better how to map curricula and topics in ways that invite experimentation with and transformation of knowledges and Discourses held by subject-area experts and by youth.

Indeed, we need research that investigates, in general, what is learned when young people experience CRP. As described in this review, some studies of bridging pedagogies have demonstrated learning gains (Lee, 1993; Warren et al., 2001), but most studies focus more on analyzing and interpreting the processes that teachers and students engage in as they enact CRP. Although these process-oriented studies are critically important in understanding how to enact CRP and why students and teachers make the meanings that they do from CRP, the field also needs analyses of what students learn in terms of conventional academic concepts, identities, and self-concepts, and in terms of new understandings and representations of the physical and social world. Such learning measures are especially important if we hope to affect education policies in secondary, content-area literacy.

Thus, research that will move the field forward includes both the ethnographies and discourse studies that will allow us to understand the processes of CRP in more detailed ways (e.g., Edwards & Eisenhart, 2002), as well as studies that will allow us to examine learner outcomes in varied ways, including alternative outcomes that arise from the transformed insights that are likely to result from CRP (e.g., Lee, 1993; Morrell, 2002). Ethnographies that examine how youth use language and texts in their

homes and communities outside of school (e.g., Moje, Peek-Brown, et al., in press) can provide important information to teachers about what different groups of young people may bring to classroom learning. In addition, school-based ethnographies that examine how different content-area classrooms establish cultural norms and discursive practices can reveal the assumptions that both teachers and students make about the work of teaching and learning. Because these assumptions are often invisible to those who live and work inside particular contexts, the long-term and intensive data collection of a participant observer—the classroom or community ethnographer—can be critical in revealing these assumptions and offering information about how such assumptions get turned into classroom and community norms. Discursive studies can be embedded in ethnographies, with the researchers focusing on detailed, microanalyses of the “ways with words” of people in particular communities, classrooms, or content areas.

Thus, such work can include studies of youth out of school, of classrooms actually engaging in CRP, of community-based organizations and how they engage youth in social action projects, and studies that collect pre- and postinformation on the development of learning over time that results from particular CRP enactments; design experiments; and interventions. In short, mixed-method designs that illuminate processes, practices, and products are necessary for the field to move forward and offer practice that is responsive to all cultures for all students.

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